



STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION PLAN FOR WEST MAPLE NEIGHBORHOOD MINUTES

Task Force Meeting #6
May 12, 2011, 10am
Merchantville Borough Hall

Attendees:

Denise Brouse, Merchantville Clerk
Bill Watson, Merchantville Zoning Officer
Terry Carr, Pennsauken Econ Dev
Wayne Bauer, Police Chief Merchantville
Charles MacAdams, Merchantville property owner
Mara Wuebker, Ragan Design Group

Jeanne Collins, Merchantville resident
Bernie Kofoet, Pennsauken Public Works
Larry Cardwell, Pennsauken Econ Dev
Marvin Gaskill, Merchantville resident
Joe Garbarino, Masonry Preservation Group
Mike Wisnosky, Ragan Design Group

1. Neighborhood Planning

- a. Visioning Session – The task force broke into two groups to discuss opportunities for Route 130 and Maple Avenue.
 - i. Group 1: The group began by discussing the overall concept of revitalization of the Route 130 corridor and Maple Avenue. We began at the furthest point south along Route 130 and continued north onto Maple Avenue continuing east along this roadway.

Route 130

1. Beginning at the Parkway Dental building, the group recommended that this viable business remain. However it was noted that there is a need for a trash enclosure for this business since trash piled outside the building making the property unsightly.
2. The group recommended that a zoning line be established mid block to the Liquor Storage. It was further recommended that the portions of the existing parcels fronting 130 be zoned for retail/commercial and the portions of properties fronting Roosevelt Avenue should remain zoned residential.
3. The group next turned their attention to the Liquor Storage building. After much discussion, the group decided that the building, given its unique architecture, was worth saving and recommended rehabilitation. It was recommended that an investigation into the property maintenance code may reveal violations and

enforcement of the code could produce an upgrade of the property. A New Jersey Transit bus stop with a pull-off area along Route 130 just south of the Liquor Storage building was also recommended.

4. The group unanimously agreed that the vacant Kawasaki building should be demolished and that the site be converted into a gateway to the community. Discussions focused on the possibility of contamination of the site and the possibility of obtaining brownfields money to clean the property. A “welcome to the West Maple Neighborhood” sign and landscaping were some of the recommendations for this property.

North Side of Maple Avenue

1. The Sprint compound has its own unique set of design issues. It was agreed that some streetscape improvements consisting of landscaping along the existing fence buffering to the compound would be a reasonable improvement. The group indicated that street trees and hardscape improvements be provided along the frontage of the property. The group also suggested that Sprint be contacted and asked to either relocate, remove or rehabilitate the dilapidated former gun shop building (Pennsauken Township block 5203, lot 4.01). It was concluded that the entire Sprint compound is in desperate need of site improvements.
2. The group next turned their focus on the Maple Avenue and Federal Street Overpass/43rd Street intersection. It was agreed that a redesign narrowing the traffic lanes was needed shortening the walking distances bringing the intersection to a pedestrian scale. Ragan Design will be providing redesign options to the group at an upcoming meeting.
3. The group discussed the reuse of the vacant Smart/Goodyear Tire Center building (Borough of Merchantville block 3, lot 5) located at the intersection of Maple and Euclid Avenues. The discussion focused on whether the building should be razed and the lot redesigned for off-street parking. The group concluded that it would be in the best interest of the neighborhood to have site rehabilitated to a ratable use to service the neighborhood as opposed to creating a parking lot on the property.

South Side of Maple Avenue

1. It was a general consensus of the group that there is a need in the neighborhood for additional parking. Poplar Avenue is currently designated as a one-way street from Maple Avenue towards to Myrtle Avenue with parking permitted only along the east side of the street. It was suggested that Poplar be designated as a two-way street with parking permitted on both sides.
2. There exists an ally-way behind the 606 building connecting Poplar Avenue with Hamilton Avenue. In addition, several homes fronting Poplar and Myrtle Avenues have deep lots in excess of 200 feet. Given these conditions, there appears to be an opportunity to provide an area for off-street parking. The group

recommended that consideration be given to create a parking lot to accommodate users who live and shop in the neighborhood.

- ii. Group 2: The Group discussed several options for Route 130/Maple gateway. The overwhelming majority felt that BOTH the Liquor Storage and vacant Kawasaki buildings should come down. Why? Both buildings are unattractive. The Kawasaki building blocks the site distance for those traveling north onto Rt. 130 from Maple Ave. The curved building blocks views into the neighborhood- very congested feeling as you enter the neighborhood b/c of the footbridge. The curved building is a dangerous impediment to sight lines for pedestrians trying to cross Maple at Roosevelt/42nd St. Group discussed that the owner of Kawasaki is a willing seller and the Liquor Storage user could utilize storage facilities elsewhere- there is no link to the neighborhood.
 1. Proposed use 1: A task force member provided sketch of potential Community Gardens for both sites at the gateway. Group discussed that community gardens would need a secure, attractive fence with perimeter landscaping.
 2. Proposed use 2: Both sites at the gateway would become a Welcome and green space area with West Maple Neighborhood sign, grass, and attractive landscaping. Ex. Haddon Township sign off of 130, Collingswood off of 130, Pennsauken memorial off of 130. This would provide an attractive transition from Route 130, signifying that you are entering a neighborhood. It would provide a sense of identity and landmark for the neighborhood. Group discussed signage that incorporates the maple leaf and 3 communities' names.
 3. Proposed use 3: Kawasaki and Liquor storage sites would become welcome & green space area as described above in 2. Residential uses on 42nd St would remain. However, former screen printing building/dog training compound would be used for a new commercial use. Approx 30,000 sq ft. Current conditions of site have blighting effect on neighborhood. Gives impression that area is unmarketable. It is believed that owner is living in an apartment on-site. It is unknown what business, if any, is operating there currently. The buildings look vacant.
 4. Proposed use 4: Kawasaki site would become welcome & green space area with West Maple Neighborhood sign and attractive landscaping. However, the Liquor storage site would become part of an assemblage of properties for a larger commercial user on the block. Users discussed: fast food restaurant, medical office/imaging – playing off of Parkway Dental use, other types of retail. Charlie will talk to friend about type of potential users that would be interested in this type of site. Would need to properly screen residential neighborhood from new commercial user- i.e., landscaping, fence, no egress onto Roosevelt/42nd St.

5. Other potential items discussed: a) Incorporating deceleration lane on Route 130 (using part of Liquor storage site) to transition traffic from 130 to Maple Ave. b) Constructing bulb-out on Maple Ave with stop sign to slow down traffic on Maple Ave and improve pedestrian safety for those crossing Maple Ave from 42nd St; move NJ Transit bus stop from 130 to Maple Avenue in front of Ursulas with bus utilizing 130 North on-ramp to get back onto 130, per task force member sketch. c) Extending the sidewalk along Route 130 (b/w 4550 Crescent Boulevard & Maple Avenue). d) Incorporating a bus shelter on Route 130 either at Kawasaki site, Liquor storage site, or behind residential properties (this would require reducing backyards of residential properties and moving a garage/shed). e) Constructing an attractive homogenous fence behind the residential sites to screen the residences from Route 130 and to provide a more attractive fence line along 130. f) Group discussed that it would not be a good idea to divide Block 1068 in half (i.e., Route 130 side being zoned for commercial purposes and the 42nd street side being zoned for residential purposes) because the commercial portion fronting on Route 130 would not produce lots deep enough to be suitable for commercial uses. Lots are already shallow as it is.
 6. Items Agreed upon: take down both buildings at the entrance to the neighborhood from Route 130, incorporate at least one green space welcome area at the Kawasaki site, incorporate deceleration lane on Route 130, if possible. Construct bus shelter for bus stop. Extend sidewalk along Route 130 to make safer for pedestrians.
- b. Survey Results – RDG is tallying the survey and will e-mail the results to task force members. Survey will be discussed at next meeting. There were 43 respondents to the survey- 28 from Merchantville, 14 from Pennsauken, and 1 from Camden.
 - c. Immediate Needs List – During the public workshop, it was suggested that an ‘immediate needs list’ be created that would provide the 3 communities with a list of items developed by the Task Force that can be worked on now, rather than waiting until the plan is drafted. Some of the items are ‘quick-wins,’ while others would benefit from initiating now. Task force members should provide feedback on the list to Mara. Pennsauken advised that some quick-win activities have already taken place in the neighborhood, including Pennsauken public works clean-up of the footbridge area, communication of trash collection days to residents of 4305 Maple Ave, which is a building that straddles two municipalities and has two different trash pick up services, enforcement of trash collection rules at Eagle Electric.

2. Next Meeting and Upcoming Deadlines

- a. Next Meeting: June 9, 2011. The group discussed the possibility of holding the next Task Force meeting in Camden in order to get input from that community, as it is an

essential partner to making changes to the gateway into the neighborhood. RDG will try to arrange.

- b. Municipal Timesheets: Larry and Terry submitted timesheet for April.